

MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS - US Daily Brief 21-11-22

By Adam Burrowes

The White House

09:00 ET 14:00 GMT	President Biden receives his daily briefing
11:15 ET 16:15 GMT	The President pardons the National Thanksgiving Turkey

Elections Countdown:

- ❖ Georgia Senate Runoff: 15 days
- ❖ 2024 Presidential Election: 715 days

Democrat News

House Democrats are expected to announce their new leadership group next week without significant intra-caucus disagreement over the direction of the party.

- Rep Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), poised to take over from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) as leader of the party, rejected the suggestion that there is “disarray” within the party after Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) told the New York Times that there was “healing that needs to be done in our caucus.”
- Jeffries wrote in a letter announcing his leadership bid: “I write to humbly ask for your support for the position of House Democratic Leader as we once again prepare to meet the moment.”

Jeffries told CNN’s Jake Tapper: “The thing about us, Jake, is that while we can have some noisy conversations at times, about how we can make progress for the American people, what we’ve seen is that under the leadership of Speaker Pelosi (D-CA), Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Jim Clyburn (D-SC), we’ve constantly been able to come together.”

- Jeffries (D-NY) continued: “It’s an honour to stand on the shoulders of such an extraordinary group of leaders, Jim Clyburn, Steny Hoyer and, of course, Nancy Pelosi, a historic speaker, a legendary leader, someone who has left an incredible footprint for good, for change, for positivity, for progress for the American people.”

On raising the debt limit Jeffries said: “I think we have to look at all options. But I certainly leave it to Speaker Pelosi and the existing leadership team. And we look forward to working in partnership with them to figure out what’s the right approach prior to the end of this calendar year.”

Republican News

US Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Friday that Jack Smith will act as special counsel on probes related to former President Donald Trump.

- Politico: “In an afternoon statement delivered before cameras at Main Justice, Garland argued the appointment of veteran DOJ hand Jack Smith was necessary given that Trump and Joe Biden could be facing off for the presidency in 2024.”
- Garland said: “Such an appointment underscores the department’s commitment to both independence and accountability in particularly sensitive matters.”

Trump said, in an interview with Fox News Digital: “I have been going through this for six years - for six years I have been going through this, and I am not going to go through it anymore.”

- Trump continued: “I have never heard of such a thing. They found nothing. I announce and then they appoint a special prosecutor. They found nothing, and now they take some guy who hates Trump. This is a disgrace and only happening because I am leading in every poll in both parties. And I hope the Republicans have the courage to fight this. I am not going to partake in it. I’m not going to partake in this.”

Trump-ally Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) tweeted that Republicans should “IMPEACH MERRICK GARLAND!” and insisted her party “refuse to appropriate any funding to Merrick Garland’s Special Counsel and defund any part of the DOJ acting on behalf of the Democrat party as a taxpayer funded campaign arm for the Democrat’s 2024 presidential nominee.”

- Taylor Greene’s comments may foreshadow an acrimonious atmosphere of the next Congress. Trump loyalists may exploit the razor thin Republican majority in the House to push for more politically sensitive investigations while raising the risk of brinksmanship over government funding negotiations.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) yesterday commented on what type of House Speaker he believes Kevin McCarthy would make: “If you had asked me five years ago, I would have said a pretty good one. Now I think he has cut so many deals with bad people to get to this position that I think he’s not going to be a leader at all. I think he will be completely hostage to the extreme wings of the Republican Party.”

Congressional Business

The House is out

The Senate is out

Committee Schedule –

APEC

US Vice President Kamala Harris wrapped up a hectic summit schedule in a speech to leaders at the APEC Summit on Saturday:

- Harris said: "As I have made clear throughout my time in Bangkok: under our administration, the United States is a strong partner for the economies and companies of the Indo-Pacific, and we are working to strengthen our economic relationships throughout the region, including by increasing two-way trade flows and the free flow of capital, which supports millions of American jobs."
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Trade Representative Ambassador Tai issued a joint ministerial statement: "We will adopt more balanced and inclusive trade and economic policies, and reiterate our determination to deliver a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and predictable trade and investment environment. We will continue our efforts to keep supply chains functioning, secure and resilient. We will continue to work to ensure a level playing field to foster a favourable trade and investment environment and reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open and to address supply chain disruptions."

China

Vice President Kamala Harris also spoke briefly with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday, further indicating that the lines of communication are beginning to re-open between the two biggest economies.

- Harris said on Twitter: "I greeted President Xi before the APEC Leaders Retreat. I noted a key message that President Biden emphasized in his November 14 meeting with President Xi: we must maintain open lines of communication to responsibly manage the competition between our countries."

Beijing will be closely watching the GOP Congressional leadership elections for signs that a Republican-led House might take a softer approach to China.

- McCarthy has previously indicated that he would travel to Taiwan if he were to become House Speaker. He has also accused the Biden administration of taking a soft line on Beijing suggesting that a McCarthy-led House will continue to pursue a hawkish line on China.

Reuters: "Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), the Republican leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, said on Sunday he would form a select committee on China if he is elected speaker of the chamber, accusing the Biden administration of not standing up to Beijing."

- McCarthy: "China is the No. 1 country when it comes to intellectual property theft. We will put a stop to this and no longer allow the administration to sit back and let China do what they are doing to America."

Qatar

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken is in Qatar for a two-day trip to launch the fifth annual US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue.

- Blinken's trip comes amid vocal criticism from human rights groups regarding Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup. The Secretary will watch the US play their opening game against Wales in Doha, today.

- Qatar remains an important strategic partner for the West in countering the impact of a massive reduction in Russian natural gas supplies to Europe.

Ukraine

The White House has continued to maintain that only Ukraine can decide when to pursue peace negotiations with Russia, despite comments from top US officials seeming to suggest that it may be prudent for Kyiv to be open to talks.

- White House national security spokesman John Kirby: "We all agree that a diplomatic negotiated settlement is the next best thing to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin just pulling his troops out. We have also said that Zelensky gets to determine if and when he's ready for negotiations and what those negotiations look like. Nobody from the United States is pushing, prodding or nudging him to the table."

Kirby's comments come days after Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley suggested that Kyiv could take advantage of victories on the battlefield and open talks toward ending the war.

- Kirby continued: "We're not going to have discussions with the Russians about ending this war in Ukraine, without Ukraine being a part of that conversation. Those conversations aren't happening because President Zelensky has made it clear that he's not ready for that."

Zelensky told the Halifax International Security Forum on Friday: "Russia is now looking for a short truce, a respite to regain strength. Someone may call this the war's end. But such a respite will only worsen the situation. Immoral compromises will only lead to new blood."

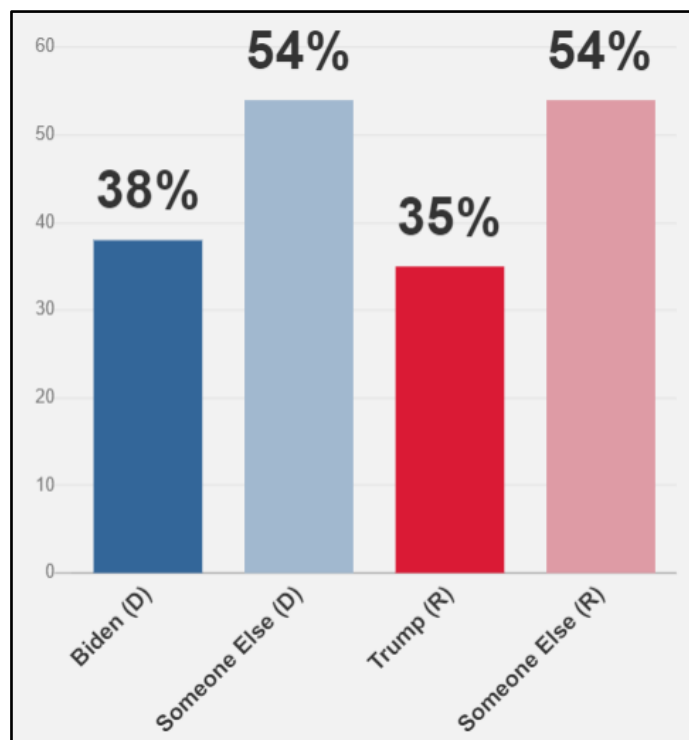
- Zelensky said that "honest peace" could be achieved only by "the complete demolition of Russian aggression."
- The Hill: "It's unclear how formally Russia made the truce proposal — or if Moscow made it at all. Zelenskyy has made these kinds of remarks before, claiming that any effort to stop the fighting would benefit Russia more than Ukraine. Ukrainian troops currently have momentum in the war, having recently forced the Russians to withdraw from the southern city of Kherson."

Poll of the Day

Marist has released a report showing that a majority of respondents from both parties would prefer a new presidential candidate for 2024 over a Biden-Trump rematch.

- Marist: "Majorities of Democrats and Republicans, including independents who lean toward these parties, do not think President Joe Biden or former President Donald Trump are their parties' best hope at winning the Presidency in 2024."

Chart 1: 2024 Presidential Nominees, %



Source: Marist

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